

MUSIC INDIE ROCKERS INSPIRED BY
FILM PSYCHO P.3

TRAVEL THE CITY OF PRINCELY
MANSIONS P.5

FOOD THE CHINESE SEASON FOR
CHUNBING CONTINUES P.8

今日北京

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LONELY URBAN HEART

INSPIRED BY CITY DWELLERS TRAPPED IN
PRISONS OF THEIR OWN MAKING, HUANG ZHEN PAINTS
SCHOOLGIRLS IN SCENES OF PROFOUND ISOLATION. P.4

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BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

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ENTERTAINMENT



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Wolves the Best Actors in Wolf Totem

BY DIAO DIAO



Mongolian actress Ankhnyam Rachaa

February 19 marked the release of two very different films: the smart pilot drama *Triumph in the Sky* and the tired environmental allegory that is *Wolf Totem*.

Based on the 2004 novel by Jiang Rong, *Wolf Totem* is a fanciful semi-autobiographic work that draws on Jiang's volunteer experiences in Inner Mongolia from 1967 to 1978. The highly anticipated film adaptation marked the return of Jean-Jacques Annaud to China after years spent on a blacklist.

But Chinese films based on books have been ill fated as of late, and *Wolf Totem* is no exception.

Readers were unanimous in their conclusion that the most qualified actors on



Director Jean-Jacques Annaud

the screen were the wolves.

While the book blends history and culture with fiction to tell a powerful political story, the film throws that message under the bus to cast *Wolf Totem* in an environmental mold that was old even in the 1990s.

Viewers expecting to be touched by the powerful spirit of the Mongolian nomads and their almost religious devotion to their homeland and tradition should look elsewhere.

It's a shame that Annaud's film bent an otherwise touching story into a documentary about wolf conservation. But it's hard to expect more from a foreign director who is even more clueless about Mongolian culture than he is about China.

The film was panned by both viewers who read the book and viewers who were experiencing *Wolf Totem* for the first time. Many criticized it for its spineless refusal to take a stance on the greedy spirit of the wolf.

It also shows a tortured understanding of how the Mongolians of northern China relate to wolves. Annaud is not to blame for this shortcoming: Jiang made the same mistake. While Mongolians may respect the wolf as master of the steppe, they do not bow before it: they fight and kill wolves when they dare to attack.

The film also has a hard time identifying the separation between nomadic herdsmen and steppe farmers. The only themes left involved the relationship between human and wolves.

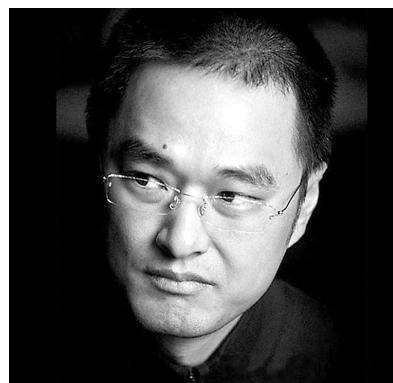
Worse yet was the oh-so-foreign assumption that all Asians look alike. The stars Feng Shaofeng and Dou Xiao bore absolutely no resemblance to the robust men of the Mongolian steppe, even made up in something akin to redface.

That's not to say the film is entirely without value.

Compared to the subpar leading men, the co-stars – who actually were Mongolian – received praise for both their appearance and strong characterization.

The furry stars were equally adept. *Wolf Totem*'s film crew kept and trained their wolves for five years to prepare the animals for the film. The visual effect of using real wolves was incredibly impressive compared to the many films that attempt to doctor other breeds or use CG to stand in for wild canines. ■

'Ever Since We Love' a Triumph for Amateur Writer



BY DIAO DIAO

The first installment in a series of novels by Feng Tang, *Ever Since We Love*, has been called one of the most direct and impressive youth novels in modern China. After years of positive reviews and a strong fan following, a film adaptation is due out on May 1.

But while the media buzzes about leading actors Han Geng and Fan Bingbing, new readers and fans are taking a break to reexamine the novel.

Like Wang Xiaobo, Hai Yan and Chen Danqing, Feng is one of many amateur writers who have found stardom in China. Feng is a graduate of Peking University Medical College and a consultant at McKinsey and Co. As such, he is able to write for pleasure rather than for a living.

It's not mere luck that amateur writers are able to draw such a crowd. Many

readers prefer their simple language and touching stories to the occasionally tortured creations of the pros.

Feng Tang is regarded as a "Beijing style" writer together with Wang Shuo and Shi Kang. Together, they are seen as the generation's successors to past Beijing writers such as Laoshes.

"Meeting Beijing writers made me feel like a newborn chicken in a group of phoenixes," Feng wrote in the preface.

Feng might be too modest.

Beijing style is about more than the decision to incorporate Beijing slang and curses – it's about the way the characters behave and the how the story progresses.

Descriptions like "syrup leaking from a broken tangsanjiao" are common in Feng Tang's book. His random metaphors and clever imagery makes his books fresh. ■


MUSIC


Dawenxi finds Courage and Talent in Indie Life

BY DIAO DIAO

Three professional musicians and a trainer at a foreign company fell in love with rock and got married. And so Dawenxi was born.

The band's name is borrowed from a phoneticization of "DaVinci," the psycho character featured in *From Beijing With Love*, one of Hong Kong actor Stephen Chow's first comedies.

The group formed around Houzi, another kind of "psycho" who was on the search for interesting music in 2012 while his peers were busy joking about the end of the world. His spirit won the attention of professional musicians Caocao, Dapeng and Sheng Xiongxuan.

Houzi is the lead singer and author of most of the band's songs. "Tasting something delicious, seeing beautiful art on the street or encountering something that makes me remember my childhood is where I find my creativity," he says.

Guitarist Caocao also helps to compose, supplying a rhythm rooted in the 1990s alt rock of the US. He credits Pearl Jam, Stone Temple Pilots and Red Hot Chili

Peppers as his greatest inspirations. "The jazz, soul and funk of America's black culture also give me a lot of ideas," he said.

Dawenxi's music emphasizes a personal world. Although the lyrics are often vague and overly poetic, they become strong enough to make an impression when combined with the group's impressive melodies.

"We make it a point to get our energy up to its peak within the first three songs whenever we have a bar show," Caocao says.

The group's most recommended songs are "I am Your Father," a soft and slow song that offers a strong contrast from their usual driving rhythms, and "Half Way to Go," a composition caught between rock, funk and soul.

In talking about their long-term plans for the band, drummer Sheng Xiongxuan said anything possible in China today could end up impossible tomorrow, and everything impossible today might be imme-

diate achievable.

"There's just no point in planning. We might not be well known, we might not get anything back for our effort, but as long as we get to put our hearts into our music we'll be happy," Sheng said.

That's not to say the band is pessimistic about the Chinese music industry.

Dawenxi said there are excellent teams behind Chinese pop, and he hopes to see Chinese indie rock follow the same path. "Mainstream music is already widely accepted by the public while indie music remains underground," Sheng said.

But Sheng said he's sure indie music will catch on.

Houzi says playing music is like collecting and assembling senses and memories into something useful. More often than not, those combination will be quite strange: it's the exceptional results that people call "music."

The band is currently recording an album slated for release during the first quarter of the year. ■



Photos by Dawenxi

LIVE SHOW ROUNDUP

Beijing boasts one of the world's most vibrant indie music scenes. Support our local artists with a trip to one of this week's live performances!

JUE Festival @ Mako Live

JUE Festival is inviting Japanese band Boris to Mako Live. Guitarist Wata, drummer Atsuo and bassist Takeshi are famous for their psychedelic guitar and heavy drums. Guests including VAGUS and NERVE will be there that night.

⌚ March 14, 8:30 pm

📍 36 Guangqu Lu, Chaoyang

🎫 150 yuan (presale), 180 yuan (at door)

A.J.K @ MAO Livehouse

Army of the Jade Kirin is playing songs from across their career on Saturday night. During the six years since the band was founded, A.J.K.'s music has changed significantly. The night's set will include no fewer than 20 songs.

⌚ March 14, 9 pm

📍 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng

🎫 60 yuan (presale), 80 yuan (at door)



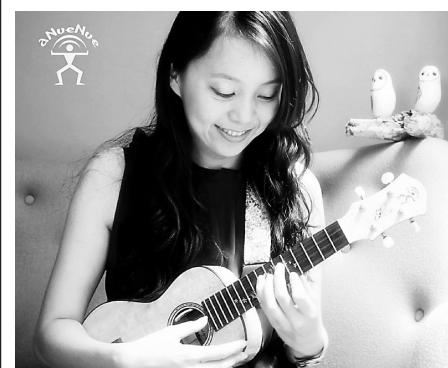
Gemini New Album Release @ Yugong Yishan

Gemini is releasing *Me Too*, its newest album, at Yugong Yishan to kick off its nationwide tour. The band's two members were born in Paris and grew up in Beijing. Both are Gemini.

⌚ March 14, 9-11:30 pm

📍 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng

🎫 60 yuan



Annier @ DDC Club

Annier started to play ukulele in 2010. She took part in the CAAM Ukulele Star competition and was the only Asian to compete in the final round. Now Annier has her own ukulele troupe and performs around the world.

⌚ March 15, 5:10-5:50 pm

📍 14, Shanlao Hutong, Dongcheng

🎫 60 yuan (presale), 80 yuan (at door)



ARTISTS



The Voice of the City



A Passerby in Deep Autumn



The Tower in the City



The World Will be Happier if You Blindfold Your Eyes



Desire



Breezy Days II

Photos by Huang Zhen

Painting as Spiritual Practice

BY LYNNE WANG

A city's soul is the sum total of its denizens. And yet all too often, city-dwellers end up lost in ramparts of their own making. It's this paradoxical relationship that inspires Huang Zhen.

In *A Tale of Cities*, an ongoing series Huang started in 2012, the artist exposes the frail nature of urban life without honing in on the ugly realities of blight. The paintings adopt a third-person perspective to show short-haired girls in dreamy and poetic scenes.

In *The Tower in the City*, Huang pours feelings of confusion and loneliness into the character of a slim schoolgirl on top of a stack of books. Her cool face is so closed to the books that she seems desperate to find and embrace the outside world.

Similar isolation is found in *Island*, which shows a group of girls seated atop a crowded city. Even adorned with gift boxes, wings and meteors, the picture is profoundly sorrowful.

"Our minds are changing as they face the life in the big city. We desire emotional sustenance but are afraid of opening up. We chase after endless wealth but neglect happiness and mental pursuits. These contradictions are what I want to capture," Huang says.

Huang grew up near the Xi'an Zoo and discovered his passion for painting before he enrolled in school.

"When I was a kid, my parents spent all their time selling goods on the street across from the zoo," Huang says. "I often spent whole afternoons visiting with the animals. Sometimes I bought popsicles and used the sticks to doodle water birds in the lake. My childhood dream was to be a zoo-keeper."

Nostalgia for those carefree days is a

big part of Huang's work. After graduating from Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts with a master's degree in oil painting in 2009, Huang painted a set of illustrations for *The Little Prince*.

"The reason why I painted them is I'm really into fairytales. Reading them is the best way to escape from reality. My paintings tend to have the light atmosphere of illustration," Huang says.

In his *Breezy Days* series, Huang depicts young girls with beautiful long hair and a literary temperament. Using purple tones and soft lines, the picture resembles something out of a romance fiction.

Huang's other works have a stronger visual impact. The series *Deep* is Huang's latest attempt to step forward and focus on the conflicts between individuals and society.

With his man bound by snakes in *Desire* and woman blindfolded in a sea of flowers in *The Devil Inside*, Huang comments on the limitations of social pressure and rules.

"Human behavior changes the environment. The latter in turn, deeply influences individual choice. Wealth, sex, social status and public recognition are increas-

ingly becoming the standards of success in modern society. Sometimes, that desire does nothing but becloud our eyes and make us miss what we really want," Huang says.

Huang says painting is an escape and the one time he doesn't need to let concerns about other people interrupt his mental pursuits.

"I love painting from the bottom of my heart. Though it occupies a lot of time in my life, it's a way to reflect on myself and think about the meaning of life," Huang says. ■



City of Royal Mansions

BY LI RUIQI

Princes of the Qing Dynasty usually received the titles of Junwang or Qinwang when one of their brothers ascended the imperial throne. Their hereditary mansions play an important role in the royal family's story beyond the walls of the Forbidden City.

As its name suggests, "Wangfujing Street" used to be a lane of 10 royal mansions from the Ming Dynasty. While its modern face is that of a pedestrian shopping center, many well-preserved mansions of the imperial age can still be found on the opposite side of town in Xicheng District.

Literary Prototype: Prince Keqing Jun

Long noted for its stunning resemblance to the mansion described in Cao Xueqin's *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the Mansion of Prince Keqin Jun was owned by a man named Fu Peng in the 1680s. Fu was Cao's cousin, and the one who provided shelter when the author's family was ruined by political struggle.

The one-year-stay at the mansion was a period of field research that would provide the foundation for Cao's detailed description of Manchu royal life.

The mansion was renovated in 2003. The screen wall, wings and rear bedrooms are especially well preserved, as they were built in the 1600s.

- Take Line 2 to Xuanwumen Station and leave from Exit E. Walk north to Xinwenhua Street. The mansion is about 400 meters to the left.
- Shifuma Hutong, Xinwenhua Xi Jie, Xicheng
- ❖ 40 yuan
- ⌚ 8 am-4:30 pm



The Mansion of Prince Keqing Jun



The Mansion of Prince Chun

Home of Emperors: Prince Chun

The last two emperors of the Qing Dynasty both made their home in the Mansion of Prince Chun.

When the Tongzhi Emperor (1856-1875) died in his 20s without a son, Prince Chun's 4-year-old son Zaitian was selected to succeed the throne as the Guangxu Emperor. When Guangxu died young, the Empress Dowager selected Prince Chun's grandson Puyi to become the Xuantong Emperor.

Manchus called the place where the crown prince was born "the den of the dragon." The mansion found later use as the ancestral hall of Prince Chun and the residence of Soong Chingling.

- Take Line 8 of the subway to Shichahai Station and leave from Exit A2. Walk along Yandai Xie Jie and cross the Yindian Bridge. Walk about 650 meters west to reach the Mansion of Prince Chun.
- 44 Houhai North Side, Xicheng
- ❖ 50 yuan
- ⌚ 8 am-4:30 pm

Mansion of Big Names: Prince Gong

Seated at the junction of Beihai and Houhai, the Mansion of Prince Gong is one of the most perfectly situated buildings in the capital – at least according to feng shui.

When it was built in 1776, the mansion was home to He Shen, the most infamously corrupt official of the Qing Dynasty.

In 1851, the mansion was bestowed to Prince Gong, the grand councilor of the empire who led a move to adopt Western technology and helped the Empress Dowager Cixi to seize power in the 1860s.

The massive mansion is the largest princely building of the Qing Dynasty. Its rear garden incorporates features of both royal and civilian architecture in 20 sections. ■

- Take Line 6 of the subway and get off at Beihai North Station. Leave from Exit B and walk 620 meters to the northwest.
- 14 Liuyinjia Jie, Xicheng
- ❖ 40 yuan
- ⌚ 8 am-4:30 pm



The Mansion of Prince Gong

Photos by dianping.com, yangtf.diandian.com & yikuaiqu.com



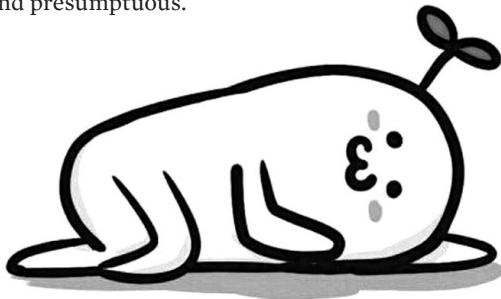
Words of the Downtrodden

BY DIAO DIAO

Tǎng Qiāng

Tǎng qiāng (躺枪) describes an innocent person's pathetic experience. It actually means something like "shot while lying in bed." If a person is dragged into a topic and scolded or blamed for something that isn't his or her fault, they might reply "tǎng qiāng."

For a good example, imagine grumpy 40-something complaining to a 20-year-old about how everyone born in the 1990s is arrogant, fatuous and presumptuous.



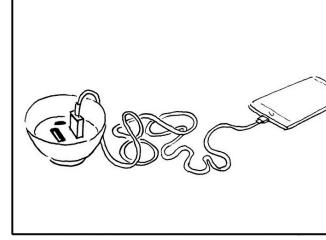
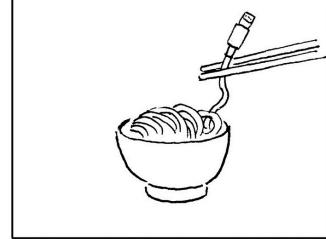
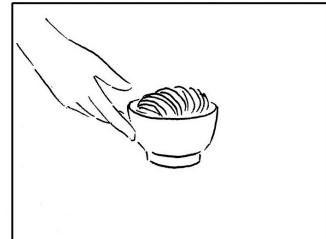
Hēi Chū Xiáng

Hēi chū xiáng (黑出翔) is a neologism to say someone is being criticized for ridiculous reasons. It also means someone is being made fun of too much. Hēi is used as a verb meaning "to criticize." People also say bēihēi (被黑) when they are made fun of.

Chūxiáng means "stool" and comes from the story of a man called Li Xiang who gave up after an unusually long forum argument and announced to the world "I'm shit." Since then, Xiang has become a synonym for feces.



WEEKLY TANGO



Tango studies at Tsinghua University's Academy of Art and Design. For more comics, follow his Sina Weibo feed at [@tangocartoon](https://weibo.com/tangocartoon).

Ask Beijing Today

"Ask Beijing Today" is our weekly column that attempts to make life in China less confusing.

You can email your own questions to ask@beijingtoday.com.cn.

Q. How can I get a credit card from a Chinese Bank?

A. If you do not own property (specifically, an apartment) it will be extremely difficult. A Chinese wife or partner who is willing to trust you with a second card from his or her own account is probably the only option. Credit limits are often very low and require that you deposit the funds before making the purchase.

An alternative option is to apply for a pre-paid Visa or MasterCard and build up a spending pattern with the bank. It's possible that after a period of time they may grant you a credit card.

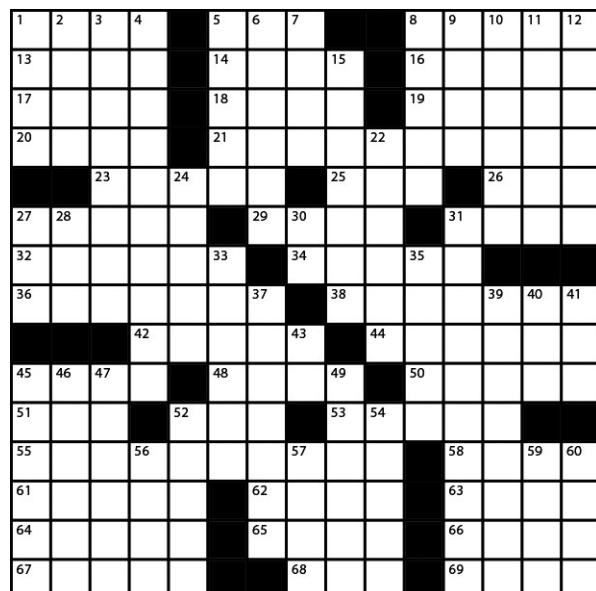
Q. I am a German living in Changzhou. I moved here with my girlfriend, and lately we are always running out of condoms. I used to buy a 60mm German brand called "My Size" before. Is there anywhere I can get them here, or is there something in a similar size?

A. Durex's website contains a list of its approved vendors. If you are looking for an English shopping interface, you can try ordering through Amazon since it is now delivering to China.

Q. How can I send money from China Construction Bank to Barclays in the UK? I'm not talking about huge sums - just 1,000 yuan per month. I have an IBAN number. Can I just select this on a CCB ATM and press Send? What charges should I expect?

A. Use your Chinese yuan to purchase British pounds. Then fill out a remittance form at Bank of China to complete the wire transfer. You will need to know the routing number of the bank containing your account. Foreigners are limited to purchasing \$50,000, so at 1,000 yuan increments you can expect no problems. ■

THE BEIJING TODAY CROSSWORD



BY SU DERUI

Across

- Project detail
- Bulgarian coin

- Indian lute
- erectus
- Botanist's angle
- Poetic weather word
- Graduate, for short
- Study of populations
- Colored
- Kind of pneumonia

- Big bird
- Lent a hand
- Cry of pain
- Minimized its significance
- Nymph chaser
- Spigot
- Online address
- Ignited
- Level
- Basilica section
- Flag action
- Attempt
- Blight
- Convention ID
- Sanskrit tongue
- Hydrocarbon
- Water or gas carrier
- Exterminator's target
- Old hat
- Historic period
- Reef predator
- Lingo
- Study of populations
- Colored
- Kind of pneumonia

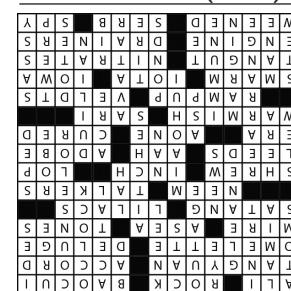
- Slender
- Mark's replacement
- First-class
- Angel's instrument
- Tattered attire
- Pleasure craft
- To the ___degree
- Slug-like discharge
- Flabbergast
- Elfin
- Tag player
- Creamy drinks
- Malcontent
- One-celled organism
- Place for mascara
- Lantern Festival treat
- Collection
- Toothpaste type
- For example
- Musical mixture
- Anatomical ring
- Like most sonnets
- Casual top
- Wading bird
- Kind of node or gland
- Solemn promise
- Blueprint
- Beginning of a conclusion
- Verb with thou

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CLASSIFIEDS

ART



Children Art Workshop: Being Vincent Van Gogh

The Living Artwork, the latest in the Children Art Workshop series, removes the dry history from art class to turn it into a fun, playful and engaging experience. Kids relive the experiences of past masters, visit their studios, try their techniques and work with their ideas.

In this third workshop, kids will work like Vincent Van Gogh by creating dioramas of the artist's most iconic works and developing their own self-portrait. Being Vincent Van Gogh is a fun way for kids to explore and experience Van Gogh's world, building skills through interactive art and making activities related to his life and work, all while learning about post-impressionism.

- ⌚ March 14, 2 - 5 pm (Lido);
March 15, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm (Soho)
- 👉 Blue Bridge Education, Andersen Garden 118, Upper East, Chaoyang (Lido); Tower A753, Chaowai Soho (Soho)
- ₩ 400 yuan per child, including materials and activities
- 📞 (010) 5900 0270
- ✉ eng.bluebridgeedu.com

DINNING



The Wine Club at Grand Hyatt Beijing

The Wine Club presents a tour of wines with selections tailored to each season. Come and enjoy the colors and tantalizing aromas of these fine wines with a tapas style buffet.

March 26 will pit Italy against France in an ancient competition and journey from Tuscany to Bordeaux and Piedmont to Burgundy. Return on May 28 for Vinos

Latinos, an evening of bottled passion. From Argentina to Chile and Spain to Italy, this is the perfect way to start the spring season and the best time to share wines with friends and colleagues.

Sign up to enjoy a complimentary one-year membership.

- ⌚ 6 - 9 pm, March 26, May 28
- 👉 Redmoon, 1F, Grand Hyatt Hotel, Beijing Oriental Plaza, 1 Dong Chang'an Jie, Dongcheng
- ₩ 195 yuan (15 percent surcharge)
- 📞 (010) 6510 9024
- ✉ beijing.grand.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/entertainment/lounges/index.jsp

COMMUNITY



Build Emotional Resilience in Kids

The world can be both a fantastic and frightening place, but it's never possible to shield your children from the ups and downs of life. However it is possible to raise them to be resilient and to provide them with the tools they need to respond to the challenges of adolescence and to navigate into adulthood.

- ⌚ 10 - 11:30 am, March 18
- 👉 International SOS, Suite 105, Wing 1, Kunsha Building, 16 Xinyuan Li, Chaoyang
- 📞 (010) 6462 9112
- ✉ seminar@internationalsos.com
- ₩ internationalsos.com

NIGHTLIFE



Kempinski Vienna Ball Beijing 2015

This year, Kempinski Hotel Beijing is bringing a jewel of Austrian history to China. Come visit this glamorous and dazzling gala in the magnificent setting of one of Beijing's most remarkable hotels.

Kempinski is introducing its Kempinski Vienna Ball Beijing, which will be held on March 21 under the patronage of the Austrian Ambassador Irene Giner-Reichl, the Austrian Embassy Beijing Culture Department, the City of Vienna and Austrian Airlines.

Although balls are already world famous outside of Vienna, this Austrian social event marks a new experience in the heart of China's capital.

- ⌚ 6:30 pm - 2 am, March 21
- 👉 Kempinski Hotel Beijing Lufthansa Center, Beijing Lufthansa Center, 50 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang
- ₩ 1,380 yuan / 1,480 yuan per person
- 📞 (010) 6465 3388 / 6410 4200
- ✉ catering.beijing@kempinski.com
- ₩ kempinski.com/beijing



Made in China Release Tour: Beijing Leg

Throughout March, Goa Productions is holding a tour across China for its latest release: *Made In China*. The album marks the first release by China's first generation of native psytrance artists.

Goa Productions main man Atoned Splendor has spent the past year working closely with three promising Chinese talents: Acid Echoes, Yi and Sixears. The outcome was three killer tracks, "Tribalize" "Polysix" and "Goblin Funk." To celebrate this landmark, the three producers will be taking their tracks across the nation to parties in Beijing, Shanghai, Kunming, Dali, Guiyang and Xi'an. Make sure you don't miss this chance to catch history in the making.

Keep your eyes on the Middle Kingdom and Goa Productions.

- ⌚ 10 pm - 6 am, March 20
- 👉 Mako Live House, Courtyard 36, Guangqu Lu, Chaoyang (500m south of Carrefour Shuangjing)
- ₩ 50 yuan
- 📞 (010) 5205 1112/3
- ✉ makolive@163.com
- ₩ mako001.com

MUSIC

Awesome Tapes from Africa

JUE | Music + Art is bringing cassette culture back to China this March with Awesome Tapes from Africa. Since 2006, Brian Shimkovitz's Awesome Tapes from Africa blog has been shedding light on obscure and wonderful sounds from across the African continent. As a DJ, he travels from clubs to festivals to DIY spaces, bringing the blog to life with two- to three-hour sets that blend folkloric pop, left-field dancefloor gems and hip-hop beats he's collected from African marketplaces.

- ⌚ 10 - 11:30 pm, March 19
- 👉 Dada, Unit 101, Bldg B, 206 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng
- ₩ 50 yuan
- 📞 18311080818
- ✉ 2015.juefestival.com

St Patrick's Day Traditional Irish Music



Tuesday 17 March
8pm til late

FREE ENTRY

Drink Specials
All Night



Scan For
Full Details!



BLACKWATER: Live Irish Music

BLACKWATER is an international band based in Beijing that has been playing Irish music since 2009. It consists of the singer Desmond McGarry (Canada), Zoe Wang (China) on the accordion, Kyle Daley (US) on whistle, vocals and bodhran, and Nico Torrese (France) on guitar.

Their music draws from the rich traditional Irish repertoire. From beautiful ballads to frenzied jigs and reels, BLACKWATER is the most authentic Irish band one can hear in Beijing. They've played in countless bars and pubs around Beijing, and also have performed at the National Library of China and the Tianjin Concert Hall.

The Irish community of Beijing and the Irish Embassy trust Black water to bring its authentic touch to many public and private events. But their most special concerts are the ones they've played for two presidents of the Republic of Ireland in December 2014 and June 2010.

BLACKWATER's self-titled debut album was released by Tree Music in 2010.

- ⌚ 8 pm - 2 am, March 17
- 👉 Fubar, Workers Stadium East Gate, Chaoyang (100m on the right, behind Stadium Dog)
- 📞 (010) 6593 8227
- ✉ info@beijingfubar.com

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HOLIDAY FOODS



Foods for Spring: Chunbing

BY DIAO DIAO

Lichun marks the start of spring in most Asian cultures, and as with all special days it requires a special food. Although this year's Lichun was on February 4, we are still in the Chinese solar spring: that means it's time for chunbing!

Chunbing, often oddly translated as "spring pancakes," are a tortilla-like wrap used to fold up stir-fried vegetables. They are especially popular in north China, where they are associated with hope for a prosperous harvest year.

It is said that the tradition of eating chunbing began in Chaozhou, where the wraps are a popular traditional snack. These days, most people consider the chunbing of northern China to be superior.

Records of chunbing can be found as early as the Song Dynasty. According to some texts, a Song Dynasty emperor gave chunbing as gifts to his courtiers at Wumen when spring came. Usually these were stuffed with radishes and lettuce. By the Qing Dynasty, chunbing were wrapping a much greater variety of vegetables.

Many poets such as Du Fu and Yelü Chucai penned verses about chunbing, then known as chunpan, to remark on the delicious taste.

The double-layer wraps seem easy to make and taste soft, but there is a lot of skill involved to prevent the dough from becoming too hard.

There are many ways to eat chunbing. They can be rolled with vegetables, eaten with sauces or cooked with cabbage.

The best chunbing are exceptionally thin – almost as thin as the lotus wraps used to fold up slices of Peking duck. Many Beijing families cook spinach, leeks, egg-sand lightly cooked meats for their chunbing filling. ■



Fried chunbing are called spring rolls. CFP Photos

MAKE YOUR OWN WITH THIS RECIPE

Learn to Make Chaohecai

BY DIAO DIAO

Chaohecai is not just for stuffing chunbing, it's also a popular vegetarian dish served in many restaurants throughout the year. It's not hard to make your own.

Ingredients:

- 200g green bean sprouts
- 70g spinach
- 3 eggs
- 50g starch
- vermicelli
- ginger
- green onion
- prickly ash
- oil



Photo by ly.cnsn.gov.cn

The Steps:

1. Clean the bean sprouts. Shred the ginger and soak the vermicelli in water to soften. Cut the spinach into 5cm segments.
2. Boil the spinach. Transfer it to a bowl of cold water when it goes soft. Remove and let stand for preparation.
3. Cut the soaked vermicelli into 10cm segments. Beat the eggs with some salt in a bowl.
4. Heat some oil in your wok. Add the beaten eggs. When the eggs are cooked, remove and set aside.
5. Heat some oil in the pan again. Add the prickly ash and cook. When the smoke takes on the prickly ash's scent, remove it. Add the bean sprouts, ginger and green onion. Stir-fry.
6. When the bean sprouts change color, add the vermicelli, egg and spinach, cook for one minute. Add salt to taste.

Chunbing King of the Old City

BY DIAO DIAO

Lizhong Chunbing King is famous for making some of the capital's best chunbing. Located in the heart of the old city center, Lizhong attracts both locals and foreigners with its good taste and large portions.

The chunbing made by Lizhong Chunbing King are thin and soft and served hot. They are best matched with meat and cold vegetable dishes.

The beef and pork pickled in special sauce are some of the shop's most popular dishes. Each is served with vinegar and other dipable seasonings.

Lizhong offers a variety of bean sprout dishes mixed with bean threads, leeks or meats for rolling in its chunbing. Fried eggs are another popular filler.

Other popular dishes include jingjiang-rousi, a plate of shredded meat and green onion cooked with a Beijing sauce and eaten with pieces of tofu. Also consider the shredded potato with vinegar and gedatang, a Beijing soup of flour, egg, tomato and cucumber.

A half order of chunbing comes with six wraps and may be enough to serve two persons. The getatang comes in a large basin and serves five persons. ■



Pickled pork



Fried eggs



Bean sprouts

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Lizhong Chunbing King

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